A BRIEF CATECHISM

ON DIFFICULT SCRIPTURE PASSAGES AND INVOLVED QUESTIONS ON THE USE OF THE SWORD

By P. H. Richert, D. D.

Newton, Kansas

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is dedicated to the dear draftees of our church, who often look for some help in answering questions that come to them regarding the exact meaning of certain scripture passages bearing on the use of the sword.

There is a book out on this subject by G. H. C. Macgregor, D.D., D. Litt., entitled, "The New Testament Basis of Pacifism." But our Peace Committee has never recommended it, very likely because of some too liberal passages in it, which suggest that certain difficult scripture passages attributed to Christ may have suffered at the hands of the reporters, or may never have been said by Jesus. Besides, the author uses the expression "redemptive" to describe the blessings of the C. O. position. This is an unscriptural use of the term. While the author admits that Christ's redemption is unique, he still uses this term in a sense in which the scriptures never use it. This is confusing, especially for young people. It is true, that Christ was a C.O., and could not have become our Redeemer, if he had defended himself against arrest, etc. But it is just as true that no other C. O.'s position is redemptive, even if he should die as a martyr. Such a martyr is a powerful witness, but not a redeemer. For such witness-suffering there is still great need, as Paul sees it (Col. 1:24), but not for redemptive suffering. Christ's suffering was both, for witness and for redemption but ours can be only for witnessing.

Otherwise that book is about the best on the market on this subject of Pacifism.

This small "Catechism" is based on a short treatise on this subject, which the writer was asked to prepare for the Peace Committee some years ago, and which received its approval. It is mostly an enlargement on that treatise, but is now presented in the form of questions and answers to make it more clear. This edition has been prepared for the *"Committee on Doctrine and Conduct"* of the General Conference.

In love for our draftees and for Christian Peace,

Newton, Kansas
November 11, 1942 — P. H. Richert

Motto: *"Be ready always to give an answer to any man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."* — I *Peter* 3:15

A BRIEF CATECHISM ON DIFFICULT SCRIPTURE PASSAGES AND INVOLVED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE USE OF THE SWORD

MILITARIST.— You C.O.'s take such a peculiar stand against all war, that I cannot understand, how intelligent and educated people like you can take such a position, so different from that of the vast majority of citizens, and even Christians. May I ask you for your reasons for this?

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.— Yes, I am glad to give them. In fact, it is my duty to do so. Peter says, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear," I Peter 3:15.

But the fact that this question of war and peace is such a totalitarian subject, which touches, so to say, all of life, makes it necessary to touch upon some involved theological matters, which may seem at first irrelevant, but which go right to the heart of the gospel, which is a gospel of Peace, and also touches all of life. That makes it such a deep and difficult doctrine, that the church as a whole has been slow to get to the bottom of it. So I must ask you to be patient with me, if I take more time than you expect. I suppose you expect me to answer from the Scriptures.

MILIT.— Yes, I also believe in the Scriptures, only I am confused by the many different and conflicting teachings based on the Bible, especially on this question of war. Some justify war by the Scriptures, and some condemn it by the Scriptures. And when I read it, I find many contradictions in it, so that I would first have to be convinced that the Bible is reliable, before I can fully accept answers from the Scriptures. I want my answers from the whole Bible, and not only from the New Testament, as G. H. C. Macgregor, D. D., gives them, evidently because he finds it difficult to harmonize the two Testaments. But if they cannot be harmonized, I would rather have you answer me from philosophy and history, and even common sense, than from a book that does not agree with itself, like the Bible, with its self-contradictions. Besides, even in the New Testament, Macgregor finds passages so difficult, that he suggests that the record may not be altogether reliable. Since war is a question of life and death, I want something reliable to go by.

C.O.— You are right. But if you think that philosophy is altogether reliable, or more so than the Scriptures, you are mistaken. Philosophy has real

contradictions, while the Scriptures have only apparent and not real contradictions. It is true, there is a sound philosophy, but it is hard to find sound text books for it. I know only one that comes close to what we need, namely that by Dr. Leander Kaiser, entitled, "The Philosophy of Christianity," but that seems to be out of print.

MILIT.— You speak of "sound philosophy." Is not all philosophy so logical, that it cannot miss the truth?

C.O.— No. The findings of philosophy do not only depend on logic, but chiefly on the basic principles, or "rudiments," as Paul calls them. If these rudiments are true, the whole system is true; if they are false, the whole system is false. What I mean by sound philosophy is best expressed by Paul in Col. 2:8—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." If philosophy has for its basis Christ and his teachings, it is sound.

MILIT.— If that is the case, it would bring us right back to the Scriptures anyway, and we might as well stick to it right from the beginning without that round-about way of philosophy. But then I must ask you to prove that the contradictions in the Bible are only apparent, as you say, and not real. Can you do that? When I compare books like Macgregor's, mentioned above (with its strict peace teaching), with the writings of such Bible teachers as Dr. Gray of the Moody Bible Institute or Dr. Moyer of the Riley Bible School, who strongly defend war, I have little hope that they can be reconciled. Can you do it?

C.O.— If you mean their books, I cannot do it, but the Bible teachings I can reconcile, because the Bible is consistent, while those books are not consistent. If Macgregor accepts one passage in the New Testament as reliable, and the other not, that is not consistent. And if Moyer of St. Paul uses Joel's prophecy about the last judgment on the Lord's Day, when the sun and moon shall be darkened, to defend the present wars, that is inconsistent. Joel says, "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears," Joel 3:10. But he says this to "all the heathen," that are ripe for judgment, because they rebel against God. God is here on one side, and all the heathen on the other, which has nothing to do with ordinary war. It is not one nation against another, but they are all on one side against God. It is "war," but not ordi-

nary war. God challenges them.

There is another passage in Isaiah 2:4, which speaks of ordinary war between nations, which is just the opposite of Joel's prophecy; "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." This agrees perfectly with the New Testament.

MILIT.— But can you prove to me that it also agrees with the rest of the Old Testament and many passages in the New Testament, which seem to justify war?

C.O.— Yes, I can, provided you admit that there is a difference between principles, which never change, and methods of applying them, which have to change according to time and circumstances. Principles in the Scripture (as elsewhere) never change but methods do.

MILIT.— Well, to be honest, I find it necessary in the training of my children to use different methods, according to the different ages of the children, and other varying circumstances. Yet, I love them all alike, and have the eternal welfare of all of them in mind. God, of course, must have the same right with his children, especially since he is so much wiser than I, and can fit his methods to circumstances better than I can.

C.O.— Then we can proceed to prove that there are no fundamental contradictions in the Scriptures, not even on the use of the sword.

Take e.g., the principle of capital punishment: While it is clearly taught in both Testaments (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:4), there is side by side with it also the other principle clearly taught, that the Lord alone has power over life and death. But his method of using this power has changed with time and circumstances more than once. Before the flood, God did not use man to execute capital punishment (Gen. 4:15), but reserved this to himself directly until the time of the flood (inclusive), which ended this "dispensation of conscience," as it is sometimes called. But after the flood, God changed this method, and used also man to punish murderers (Gen. 9:6). Later under the law, another change was made by including other sins besides murder under capital punishment, but only as prescribed by the law, as God himself had given it. Otherwise the law strictly forbids killing, saying, "Thou shalt not kill." (The emphasis here evidently is on "thou," i. e., in thy own name thou must not kill.) Governments, even today, have this authority as ministers

of God for righteousness, because they still stand on the O. Testament ground of law, and not on the N. Testament ground of grace, as the church does. But for the church God has prescribed other methods of dealing with evil, such as preaching the gospel, and "overcoming evil with good," because the church is no more under law but under grace. Instead of killing, the church is expected to follow Christ all the way, even unto death.

MILIT.:— Do you mean to say that God has today two methods of dealing with evil, one for the state under law, and one for the church under grace?

C.O.— Yes, that is no doubt what Christ had in mind when he told his diciples in Mark 4:42-43, "Ye know, that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them. . . But so shall it not be among you: whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister."

MILIT.— Yes, we also believe that the church should not kill, or go to war, but we make a difference between church membership and citizenship: As a church member I cannot kill, but as a citizen I must, if ordered to do so by the state.

C.O.— If I understand you correctly, you admit that you have two masters, Christ and the state, and must obey both. You also admit, that they do not always agree in their orders: The one says kill, and the other says, do not kill. How can you obey both? You really contradict yourself, and try to split yourself, which is impossible, just as Christ said, "No one can serve two masters." That is the reason why our church from its very beginning has insisted on a separation of church and state, and in principle most churches now agree with this separation. But in practice not all live up to it, especially when it comes to war.

MILIT.— But how can we separate church and state in war time? While I admit that the church is a totalitarian institution, which demands that all life, whether personal or political or business life, should become Christian, the state in war time is also often totalitarian, and demands all of life, because war is a matter of life and death.

C.O.— The only way to really separate church and state is to admit that we cannot have two masters, but only one supreme master, and that must be Christ. And whenever the state goes against Christ, we cannot obey the state. And thank God, our government recognizes this fact

by giving every citizen the choice between war service as a soldier, or peace service as a civilian. So, if you cannot kill as a church member, you need not kill as a citizen. If you do it anyway, you cannot put the responsibility on the state by excusing yourself, that you go to war only because the state demands it. That is not true in our beloved country. What excuse do you then have for going to war?

MILIT.— My excuse is, that I am fighting against evil, and for the right. Jesus said that he came to "destroy the works of the devil." Does he not expect us to help him in this?

C.O.— He certainly does, but not with carnal weapons. Our weapons are spiritual, namely the gospel, the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. Ephes. 6:10-18. Our instructions are to overcome evil with good.

MILIT.— Do you then not believe in ever using force against evil?

C.O.— Yes, force should sometimes be used to restrain evil, provided it is done without "violence," as John instructed the soldiers, Luke 3:14. In England the police use the gun but little, and they have better order than we here.

MILIT.— If you are so convinced that violence should not be used against our fellow men, how then can so many of your church members do non-combatant service in the army, and defense plant service as civilians, and so support violence?

C.O.— Our conference has voted against such service, and whoever does it, is not 100 per cent with the conference. The fact that our enemies are afraid of non-combatants sufficiently to try to destroy them, shows that the conference takes the right stand.

MILIT.— Are not those who work in defense plants even more inconsistent than those who do non-combatant service in the army? The former do it voluntarily, while the latter are drafted.

C.O. While it is true that the latter are drafted, they are not compelled to serve in the army. If they do it, they do it voluntarily. Besides, there is more urging in the army by the officers to learn to hate than in civil work. But both are against our conference resolution. In the army, the nearest to C.O. service is of course hospital service. But we do not even approve of that.

MILIT.— How can a C.O. be consistent, when even agriculture is largely regulated for war purposes?

C.O.—Yes, it is difficult to draw the line, but as far as raising more wheat or more chickens, etc., is con-

cerned, that is, in effect, chiefly to prevent general suffering, because even if we did not raise more food in war time, the soldiers would be the last to go hungry. So the increased food is chiefly for civilians.

MILIT.— Are not the governments today God's instruments, whom we must obey?

C.O.— Insofar as these instruments obey God, yes. But if they disobey God, we must obey God rather than man. If, e. g., the government orders us to kill, we as followers of Christ, our King, have different orders and must refuse to kill.

MILIT.— Where do we find such orders, not to kill? I know that one of the ten commandments forbids killing, but at the same time the law commands to kill breakers of the law; so that commandment cannot decide the matter for us. That is one of the contradictions that puzzles me.

C.O.— As already explained above, the commandment not to kill refers to killing in man's own name, without orders from God. If God would command us Christians to kill to-day, we would do it, but he has told us not to kill.

MILIT.— Where do you find this command, that followers of Christ must not kill?

C.O.— When the soldiers one day asked John "What shall we do?" John replied, "Do violence to no man." Does that not forbid killing even by a soldier? And when Peter was ordered to put the sword back in its place, does that not forbid killing even in defense? And when we are commanded to love our enemies, does that not forbid killing?

MILIT.— Yes, I have to admit that; but the fact that God loves even those of his enemies whom he has killed, or ordered to kill, shows that it is possible to love the enemy and kill him, at the same time.

C.O.— Yes, with God all things are possible, but in the war machine the training officers tell the recruits that they must learn to hate the enemy, or else they will not be able to do all the horrible things which they will be ordered to do. Besides, how can we know that our enemies are ripe for capital judgment? God alone knows that, and God alone can always execute judgment without personal hate. For these reasons he has a right to say to us. "Avenge not yourselves. . revenge is mine, saith the Lord." And through Paul he says, "Judge not before the time, until the Lord comes."

MILIT.— Does that mean that when the Lord comes again, he will execute judgment by death?

C.O.— Exactly so. Rev. 19:11-16 shows this very clearly, as other passages of Scripture. What else can the Lord finally do with people, that even under grace ripen in sin?

MILIT.— If that is true, why then could the Old Testament judgements not also have been postponed till Christ comes again?

C.O.— For two reasons: First, before Christ came, there was no gospel to be preached to the nations, which is the only power that can save nations. Second, some of those judgments, as also some today, are for setting an example for warning.

MILIT.— Were all nations upon whom judgement came from the Lord, ripe for it?

C.O.— Yes, God was very careful and just about this, as can be seen in the case of the Amorites. When God had promised their land to Abraham, he told him that he would have to wait 400 years before he could take possession of it, "because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Where in the world is any judgement by man postponed so long, in order to let sin ripen?

MILIT.— When is sin ripe?

C.O.— Evidently, when postponement of judgement does no good any more to the sinner, or to anybody else.

MILIT.— But how about those Israelites that were executed for breaking the law of Moses? Were they also ripe?

C.O.— Yes, under the law there was no purpose in postponing judgement, as there is today under grace, which gives more reason to expect repentance and change of heart. Peter speaks now under grace of a "longsuffering of God usward," because God is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance.

MILIT.— Is this longsuffering the only difference between being under law and being under grace?

C.O.— No, there is yet another difference, namely that between shadow (in the O.T.) and reality (in the N.T. by Christ). Both, the shadow and the reality deal with a matter much more profound than capital punishment, and that is the matter of eternal condemnation. Only the grace in Christ can save from eternal death, by his atoning death. In this matter the moral law, without grace, spells eternal death, and grace in Christ spells eternal life for believers.

MILIT.— If law spells eternal death, how then could the believers in the O.T. be redeemed and have assurance of sins forgiven, before Christ had come?

C.O.— Paul explains this in Rom. 3:25-26 to the effect, that all "remission of sins that are past," was on credit, "through the forbearance of God," until the real propitiation came, namely in Christ.

MILIT.— But if the law spells death, and grace spells life, is there then not a fundamental difference between the two?

C.O.— Not if we compare the whole law (including the sacrifices for atonement in type) with the whole Christ, (including the element of fulfilled curse of the law, Gal. 3:13.) But if we separate the moral law from the sacrificial, and the grace of God in general, from the grace in Christ, which "came by Christ" (Greek: "became by Christ," John 1:17), then there is a fundamental difference. As it is, both law and grace, (the O. Testament and the N. Testament) became one in Christ, so that he could truly say, he had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. How then can there be a contradiction between the two? Christ would never have fulfilled the law, both the moral and the sacrificial, if any of its parts had been out of harmony with the grace which came by him.

MILIT.— How did Christ fulfill the law?

C.O.— He first explained the profound and ultimate meaning of it, e. g., in the sermon of the mount, and secondly fulfilled the moral law by absolute obedience and sinlessness, and the sacrificial law by his sacrificial life and death, as Redeemer.

MILIT.— Is the sacrificial life and death of all good people redemptive? One often hears these days that even soldiers, when dying in a war against evil, die a redemptive death. If that is the case, that alone would justify war, would it not? If Christ's death was redemptive as you said, why not a good soldier's death?

C.O.— No, in the first place, Christ said that no one is good except God. And second, since Christ "died once for all," there is no need of further redemption, as the Scriptures use this word for deliverance from sin's guilt. Third, the Scriptures teach expressly that "None of them can by any means redeem his brother." Ps. 49:8. So dying on the battle field has no redeeming value. This is all the more true, when we consider that no soldier goes into war for the purpose of dying, but for the purpose of killing. How can such a death be redemptive, even

if it were for a good cause? That is impossible.

MILIT.— Very well. I believe I can accept the unity and harmony between the Old and the New Testament on these points. But what about the apparent contradictions within the N. Testament itself? In one place Christ is pictured as a defenseless "Lamb," and in another place as a victorious "Lion."

C.O.— That is true, but the fact that in one chapter both figures are combined, shows that the writer could not have had any contradiction in mind, but simply two aspects of the same Christ in two different times, or dispensations, namely that of grace and that of judgement. Rev. 5:5-6. We today still live in the time of grace, and must follow the Lamb rather than the Lion. We still live in the time of which Jesus spoke, when he said to his disciples, "I send you as sheep among wolves."

MILIT.— But what would you do, if the Japs would come to California, and the whole nation would be C.O.'s like you?

C.O.— We would immediately begin to make friends of them, if we had not done so before. But most probably we would have done so, before they would have declared war. Besides preaching to them the gospel of peace, we would make, or would have made, friends of them as Christ says, "Make for yourselves friends with the unrighteous mammon." Instead of spending over 200 billion dollars for war, we would take enough of these billions to make friends, which would be cheaper than war, and the peace would be much more lasting.

MILIT.— What? Make friends of those terrible Japs?

C.O.— Well, are they worse than Judas was?

MILIT.— I would not say that, because we read, that Jesus calls Judas "a devil." John 6:70.

C.O.— What was the last word that Jesus spoke to him, knowing that he was betraying him? He said, "My friend, why hast thou come?" That is the language of love and friendship. That was putting coals of fire on his head, which burned clear down to his heart, so that he repented, saying, "I have sinned," and even the money in his hands got so hot for him, that he brought it back and got rid of it. Do you think that Judas, if he had another chance to betray Christ, would do it?

MILIT.— No, hardly. His hate against Christ was evidently less than before.

C.O.— Yes, and while repentance without faith does not save, is it not worth something, if his hate

was diminished?

MILIT.— Well, if hardened Judas could be softened somewhat by Christ's friendly words, one would expect that the Japs' hate could also be softened by friendship. But it takes much good to overcome evil, and we have not enough of it.

C.O.— That is true as far as we in our own strength are concerned, but is there any limit to the amount of good that Christ can give us? He says in John 7:38— "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he said of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive." If all Christians would believe, "as the Scripture hath said," and not as false teachers have said, there would be enough rivers of water to put out the world fire that we have to-day.

MILIT.— You speak of false teachers. Do you mean to say that we militarists have false teachers?

C.O.— If they teach you that Christ wants his followers to fight with the sword, yes.

MILIT.— Well, that is what they do, and they have Scripture for it. They point to Cornelius, the Roman soldier, who became a Christian while he was a soldier, and no one told him to quit his occupation. That shows that a Christian can be a soldier.

C.O.— Yes, but what kind of a soldier? When the soldiers asked John one day, what they should do, John told them, "Do violence to no man." Luke 3:14. Does that not put all combatants out of commission, and those that are yoked together with them in the army? It is true, no one told them to quit their occupation, as far as we know, but how long could they serve in the Roman army, if they quit doing violence to the enemy? The slavery question is a similar case: Paul never commanded Philemon to liberate his slaves, but he taught him to treat the slave as a brother. From this teaching we to-day conclude, that we should have no slaves at all, even if the Bible does not expressly forbid slavery. So it is, and even more so, with the soldier.

MILIT.— Yes, it certainly looks like it. I must confess that I have never seen it in just that light. But there are so many other difficult Scripture passages that are said to permit a Christian to take part in war, that it seems necessary to go over all of them, at least the most difficult ones. But I have one more question on my heart: Have you any consolation for one like myself, if I should do combatant military service? Would I still be a Christian?

C.O.— If you can keep your heart free from per-

sonal hate, and if you consider it your Scriptural duty to obey the government in this, you may still be a Christian, but not one that builds "gold, silver, and precious stones" on the foundation, Christ, by fighting, but rather, "wood, hay, stubble," and other fuel, which will all burn up on the day of judgement, as Paul teaches the Corinthians, who permitted "carnal strife and divisions" to split the church into factions. I Cor. 3:3-15. Paul closes this passage thus: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire,'" provided he stand in faith on Christ. Your question makes one think of this statement by Paul.

MILIT.— I certainly would not want to serve in the army for something that will burn up, or even die on the battle field for "wood, hay, stubble," or even worse things.—But let us now proceed with some further difficult passages.

C.O.— Very well. That is really what we started out for in this discussion. What are your difficult passages on the use of the sword?

MILIT.— I have brought along the following: Joel 3:10; Matt. 21:11; 10:34; Luke 22:36-38; Matt. 22: 13; Luke 19:17; 19:37; Rom. 13:1; Rev. 19:11-16.

C.O.— We will take them in the order in which you have them.

SOME DIFFICULT PASSAGES EXPLAINED

1. *Joel* 3:10: *"Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears. . Prepare war"* (v. 9)

The context shows that this refers to the great day of judgment, as vs. 15 shows: "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." It is God's challenge to those of his enemies, that are ripe for judgment. It is not a war between one nation and another, but between God and "all the heathen." These heathen are on one side, and God at Jerusalem is on the other side. So this has nothing to do with wars between nations.

2. *Matt.* 21:11: *Jesus cleanses the temple by using a scourge*

Some Christians use this scourge as an argument for the sword. But a scourge is not a sword. A scourge is for correction, but not for killing. Even loving parents will use a scourge for their child, but not a sword. While this may be used as an argument for corporal punishment, it is no argument for violence or war.

3. *Matt.* 10:34: *"I came not to send peace but the sword"*

When Jesus said this, His enemies were already planning His death. His preaching of the truth had hurt them, and they hated him unto death. Jesus knew that the truth would have just this effect; it would cause his enemies to take the sword. But rather than stopping preaching the truth, he permitted the sword to be used against him, not by him. Not that Christ wanted this but He wanted it rather than no preaching. So it is to-day.

All through history, the preaching of the truth has from time to time put the sword into the hands of its enemies, but Christ did not use carnal weapons, nor does he want his followers to use carnal weapons, not even in defense. Only spiritual weapons, the word of God, which is the "sword of the spirit," may be used by a Christian.

4. *Luke* 22:36-38: *"But now. . . . he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one"*

Of all the words of Jesus about the sword, this is the most difficult to understand. At the first glance it seems to teach the use of the sword by Christians. And it is often interpreted so, especially in view of the words, "But now," which evidently point to a new day, requiring new methods. Three new needs are mentioned: a purse, a scrip, and a sword, and the last one is described as more necessary than a garment. But a closer study of this passage in its context and setting prohibits such interpretation. It looks more like a test, or method of exposing what manner of spirit was still in at least some of the disciples, than a command to fight.

The context shows clearly that none of his disciples were ready to follow Christ all the way, even to the cross and to death. Jesus tells them, that they will all scatter and flee. Peter is not willing to admit this for himself. He says, that even if all the others should be offended on account of Christ, he would never be offended, but would follow him even into prison and into death. Did Peter really mean all he said? Had he not already provided himself secretly with a sword for defense? Yes, Peter no doubt was honest in promising to follow Christ, but not at any price. He was evidently determined, if need be, rather to kill than to die, although he knew that Jesus wanted a following at any price. Jesus, no doubt, knew Peter's weakness in this, as seen by the fact that in his warning he mentions Peter by name (vs. 31):

"Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat." Jesus even foretells Peter's denial. Since Jesus knew all this, he certainly also knew that Peter had secretly provided himself with a sword, which weakened his promise to follow Christ all the way. It almost looked like duplicity, and Peter must have felt this himself, or else he would not have hidden his sword, which branded him as a revolutionist already in his heart. He was ready to use the sword even against the government. If Jesus had done nothing about it, he himself as leader could be held responsible for it. How could Jesus prevent this? He knew that this would be the chief accusation before Pilate. So it was necessary to impress his non-resistance not only upon his diciples, but also upon the soldiers and Pilate. The most effective way to do this, was to let Peter's willingness to fight show itself openly, and then in the presence of the soldiers stop him. But why did Jesus not tell Peter that he knew about his sword? He preferred to lead him to a voluntary confession, which is always the best. But when Peter confessed, why did Jesus not rebuke him? Indirectly he did in at least two ways: He gave as his reason for the need of swords, "For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me: And he was reckoned among the transgressors." As pointed out above, swords in the diciples' hands made them transgressors in the eyes of the law. Even two swords would be enough for this. For defense, of course, they would not have been enough. So when Jesus said about the swords, "It is enough," the disciples, especially Peter, should have seen in it also a rebuke against his intentions. To interpret Christ's approval of the two swords, and of only two, as an approval for using them in defense, should have been impossible. So this was the second veiled rebuke. The third and open rebuke came later in the garden, "Put up again thy sword into its place." Here both the soldiers and the disciples got their lesson, which they needed. While Jesus' method to teach this lesson is very striking and unusual. it is not the only occasion when Jesus used methods that were about as striking as this. One day he asked Philip, where enough bread for the five thousand could be bought. Jesus knew already what he wanted to do. Why then did he ask Philip? John explains, that he did it to test Philip (John 6:6). When Jesus was anxious that his death should occur at the predicted

time, he said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." By this, Jesus, of course, did not approve of Judas' act as such, but only prescribed the time for it. So here in Luke 22 it looks very much like a test, and as if Jesus would have said to Peter, "I know that you want to fight rather than die, and I want you to show it openly at this time, so that I can give you a lesson which you will never forget." Besides, it helped to fulfil a prophecy, if it was done at this time. For this double purpose two swords were enough, but not for defense.

All other explanations of this passage seem to bring it into conflict with itself and with other passages, and must, therefore, be set aside. Even the spiritual interpretation, which makes these two swords symbols of the sword of the spirit, contradict the context, which shows that Jesus speaks here of new needs. The spiritual sword they already had, and there was no need to buy it now.

When Jesus here says, "All they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword," he makes the sword its own punishment, and that even when used in self-defense, as in this case. That is the least we can say against using the sword in defense.

5. *Matt.* 22:13: *Paying tribute to Caesar*

Since such money belongs to the government, as Jesus here teaches, and is, so to say, only loaned us, we have to pay it back when demanded, and it is not our responsibility what the government does with it, except that we should protest against war, and the use of money for war. We should use all our influence to make even the governments more Christian, and so reduce war.

6. *Luke* 19:17: *"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."*

This passage is sometimes used as an argument for capital punishment. From the standpoint of judgement, as in the Old Testament, and as it will be at the end of this dispensation, that is correct. This statement may shock some, but we must not overlook that Jesus says, "It were better for him." That is the language of love, which always seeks the best. This is the day of grace even for such offenders. Jesus never hung a millstone on any one, nor does he want his followers to do so. God alone knows the best time for it, as he did for the flood and other of his judgments.

7. *Luke* 19:37: *The slaying of Christ's enemies*

when he comes again.

This refers to the time of judgement, when the hearts evidently will not be touched any more by the gospel of grace, because they are hardened. But this is no argument for war, because this judgement is in God's hand.

8. *Rom.* 13:1: *"Let every soul be subject (Greek: hypotassesthe) unto higher Powers."*

The word "subject" (hupotassesthe) is not the word for obey (Greek: peitarchein), but it means submission as opposed to rebellion. We are here forbidden to revolt against the government, but are not commanded to do all it demands.

A follower of Christ must never fight against the government, not even in defense, as Peter did, but show humble submission. Refusing to go to war is not "resistance" (Greek: antitassemenos, verse 2, "They that resist"). Those who obey God rather than man, are not such resisters, or revolutionists. Acts. 5:29.

9. *Rev.* 19:11-16: *Christ as judge on the white horse.*

While this passage has already been touched upon, it is well to mention it again, because it is so frequently used to represent Christ as a militarist.

That it is impossible to see Christ here as a militarist, can be seen from the following: The sword which he uses is in his mouth, and represents what in other places is called the spirit of his mouth (II Thess. 2:8) by which the Lord destroys the antichrist.

Furthermore, the name of the rider is called "The Word of God" which also shows that he does not represent carnal warfare. The armies are heavenly beings, no doubt angels, which have the duty to execute judgment, as Christ foretold in his parables. Matthew 13. So all this has nothing to do with militarism, but with eternal judgment, which the Father has turned over to the Son. John 5:22. If any one thinks that the judgments of the New Testament are not as severe as those of the Old Testament, let him read Hebrews 10:28-29:

"He that despised Moses law, died without mercy. . Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

So whatever disagreement there is in the Scriptures is in method and not in principle. And war

is not a Christian method of dealing with evil.

MILIT.— While I am not yet fully clear on all points in these difficult passages which have been explained, I feel entirely different now toward the C. O.'s. I did not know that it was such a deep subject going right to the heart of Christianity, even to the atonement, which was possible, because Christ took the C. O. stand.

C.O.— I am glad you see that. I began to be afraid that you might feel that too many irrelevant matters were drawn in. But the most important Scripture passages we have hardly even touched, namely those that have no difficulty about them, as far as understanding is concerned. The only difficulty with them is, that it is hard to live up to all of them. Permit me to read to you at least those passages against war and for peace, which our Western District Conference Peace Committee has published together with its concept of true patriotism, as follows:

THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR PEACE CONVICTIONS

Thou shalt not kill. Ex. 20:13

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it. Ps. 34:14

Say not thou, I will recompence evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee. Prov. 20:22

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. Prov. 24:29

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. Prov. 25:21-22

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Matt. 5:9

But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matt. 5:39,R.V.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Matt. 5:40.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Matt. 5:44.

But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. Matt. 10:23a.

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they take the sword shall perish with the sword. Matt. 26:52

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.
Mark 11:26.

Know ye not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy lives, but to save them. Lk. 9:55b-56a.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. John 15:19.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.
John 18:36.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.
Acts 5:29.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rom. 12:14.

Recompence no man evil for evil. Rom. 12:17a.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Rom. 12:18.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom. 12:19.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Rom. 12:20.

Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom. 12:21.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. . . Rom. 13:1-3,ff.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace. Rom. 14:19a.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thru God to the pulling down of strongholds. 2 Cor. 10:3-4.

But the fruit of the spirit is. . .peace. . .Gal. 5:22.

For our citizenship is in heaven. Phil. 3:20, R. V.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts. Col. 3:15a.

Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thess. 5:13b.

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men. 1 Tim. 2:24a.

Put them in mind to be subjects to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. Tit. 3:1.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Heb. 4.12a.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12:14.

The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. 13:6.

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Heb. 13:14.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Jas. 3:18.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or to governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 1 Pet. 2:13-14.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 1 Pet. 2:19-20.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: .. .who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. 1 Pet. 2:21,23.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good. 1 Pet. 3:13.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 1 John 3;15.

OUR CONCEPT OF PATRIOTISM

As members of the historic peace churches we love our country and sincerely work for its highest welfare. True love for our country does not mean a hatred of others. It is our conviction that only the application of the principles of peace, love, jus-

tice, liberty, and international goodwill will make for the highest welfare of our country: and the highest welfare of our country must harmonize with the highest welfare of humanity everywhere. Our faith is in security through love, protection through goodwill; and for such we are willing to make the necessary sacrifice. We are opposed to war as a method of settling disputes because it is unchristian, destructive of cur highest values and sows the seed of future wars. We feel that we are true patriots because we build upon the eternal principles of right which are the only foundation of stable government in our world community.